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XXXVI LYRICS AND XII SONNETS

T.B. ALDRICH

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T. B. ALDRICH

XXXVI Lyrics  
and XII Sonnets

SELECTED FROM

CLOTH OF GOLD  
AND  
FLOWER AND THORN



BOSTON  
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY  
The Riverside Press, Cambridge  
1881

















XXXVI LYRICS  
AND XII SONNETS.

Ms W<sup>m</sup> A. Hoovey,  
With the Compliments of  
J. B. Aldrich.

March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1881.

T. B. ALDRICH

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*The Riverside Press, Cambridge :*  
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TO L. A.

*Take them and keep them,  
Silvery thorn and flower,  
Plucked just at random  
In the rosy weather —  
Snowdrops and pansies,  
Sprigs of wayside heather,  
And five-leaved wild-rose  
Dead within an hour.*

*Take them and keep them :  
Who can tell? some day, dear,  
(Though they be withered,  
Flower and thorn and blossom,)  
Held for an instant  
Up against thy bosom,  
They might make December  
Seem to thee like May, dear!*





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## LYRICS.

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### I.

#### DESTINY.

Three roses, wan as moonlight and  
    weighed down  
Each with its loveliness as with a crown,  
Drooped in a florist's window in a town.

The first a lover bought. It lay at rest,  
Like flower on flower, that night, on  
    Beauty's breast.

The second rose, as virginal and fair,  
Shrunk in the tangles of a harlot's hair.

The third, a widow, with new grief made  
    wild,  
Shut in the icy palm of her dead child.

## II.

## HESPERIDES.

If thy soul, Herrick, dwelt with me,  
This is what my songs would be :  
Hints of our sea-breezes, blent  
With odors from the Orient ;  
Indian vessels deep with spice ;  
Star-showers from the Norland ice ;  
Wine-red jewels that seem to hold  
Fire, but only burn with cold ;  
Antique goblets, strangely wrought,  
Filled with the wine of happy thought ;  
Bridal measures, vain regrets,  
Laburnum buds and violets ;  
Hopeful as the break of day ;  
Clear as crystal ; new as May ;  
Musical as brooks that run  
O'er yellow shallows in the sun ;  
Soft as the satin fringe that shades  
The eyelids of thy fragrant maids ;  
Brief as thy lyrics, Herrick, are,  
And polished as the bosom of a star.

## III.

## IDENTITY.

Somewhere — in desolate wind-swept  
space —

In Twilight-land—in No-man's-land—  
Two hurrying Shapes met face to face,  
And bade each other stand.

“And who are you?” cried one, agape,  
Shuddering in the gloaming light.

“I know not,” said the second Shape,  
“I only died last night!”

## IV.

## NOCTURNE.

## BELLAGGIO.

Up to her chamber window  
A slight wire trellis goes,  
And up this Romeo's ladder  
Clambers a bold white rose.

I lounge in the ilex shadows,  
I see the lady lean,  
Unclasping her silken girdle,  
The curtain's folds between.

She smiles on her white-rose lover,  
She reaches out her hand  
And helps him in at the window —  
I see it where I stand !

To her scarlet lip she holds him,  
And kisses him many a time —  
Ah, me ! it was he that won her  
Because he dared to climb !



## v.

## THE SHEIK'S WELCOME.

Because thou com'st, a weary guest,  
Unto my tent, I bid thee rest.  
This cruse of oil, this skin of wine,  
These tamarinds and dates, are thine;  
And whilst thou eatest, Medjid, there,  
Shall bathe the heated nostrils of thy  
    mare.

Allah il' Allah ! Even so  
An Arab chieftain treats a foe,  
Holds him as one without a fault  
Who breaks his bread and tastes his  
    salt ;  
And, in fair battle, strikes him dead  
With the same pleasure that he gives  
    him bread !

## VI.

## PALABRAS CARIÑOSAS.

## SPANISH AIR.

Good-night ! I have to say good-night  
To such a host of peerless things !  
Good-night unto that fragile hand  
All queenly with its weight of rings ;  
Good-night to fond, uplifted eyes,  
Good-night to chestnut braids of hair,  
Good-night unto the perfect mouth,  
And all the sweetness nestled there —  
The snowy hand detains me, then  
I 'll have to say good-night again !

But there will come a time, my love,  
When, if I read our stars aright,  
I shall not linger by this porch  
With my adieus. Till then, good-night !  
You wish the time were now ? And I.  
You do not blush to wish it so ?  
You would have blushed yourself to  
death

To own so much a year ago—  
What, both these snowy hands ! ah,  
    then,  
I 'll have to say good-night again !

## VII.

## A SNOW-FLAKE.

Once he sang of summer,  
Nothing but the summer ;  
Now he sings of winter,  
Of winter bleak and drear :  
Just because there 's fallen  
A snow-flake on his forehead,  
He must go and fancy  
'T is winter all the year !

## VIII.

## ACROSS THE STREET.

With lash on cheek, she comes and  
goes ;

I watch her when she little knows :

I wonder if she dreams of it.

Sitting and working at my rhymes,

I weave into my verse at times

Her sunny hair, or gleams of it.

Upon her window-ledge is set

A box of flowering mignonette ;

Morning and eve she tends to them —

The senseless flowers, that do not care

About that loosened strand of hair,

As prettily she bends to them.

If I could once contrive to get

Into that box of mignonette

Some morning when she tends to  
them —

She comes ! I see the rich blood rise

From throat to cheek ! — down go the  
eyes,

Demurely, as she bends to them !

## IX.

## RENCONTRE.

Toiling across the Mer de Glace,  
I thought of, longed for thee ;  
What miles between us stretched, alas !  
What miles of land and sea !

My foe, undreamed of, at my side  
Stood suddenly, like Fate.  
For those who love, the world is wide,  
But not for those who hate.

## x.

## AN UNTIMELY THOUGHT.

I wonder what day of the week —  
I wonder what month of the year —  
Will it be midnight, or morning,  
And who will bend over my bier ?

— What a hideous fancy to come  
As I wait, at the foot of the stair,  
While Lilian gives the last touch  
To her robe, or the rose in her hair.

Do I like your new dress — pompadour ?  
And do I like *you* ? On my life,  
You are eighteen, and not a day more,  
And have not been six years my wife.

Those two rosy boys in the crib  
Up stairs are not ours, to be sure !—  
You are just a sweet bride in her bloom,  
All sunshine, and snowy, and pure.

As the carriage rolls down the dark  
street

The little wife laughs and makes cheer ;

But . . . I wonder what day of the  
week,

I wonder what month of the year.



## XI.

## NAMELESS PAIN.

In my nostrils the summer wind  
Blows the exquisite scent of the rose !  
O for the golden, golden wind,  
Breaking the buds as it goes,  
Breaking the buds, and bending the  
grass,  
And spilling the scent of the rose !

O wind of the summer morn,  
Tearing the petals in twain,  
Wafting the fragrant soul  
Of the rose through valley and plain,  
I would you could tear my heart to-day,  
And scatter its nameless pain.

## XII.

ON AN INTAGLIO HEAD OF  
MINERVA.

Beneath the warrior's helm, behold  
The flowing tresses of the woman !  
Minerva, Pallas, what you will —  
A winsome creature, Greek or Roman.

Minerva? No, 't is some sly minx  
In cousin's helmet masquerading ;  
If not — then Wisdom was a dame  
For sonnets and for serenading !

I thought the goddess cold, austere,  
Not made for love's despairs and  
          blisses :  
Did Pallas wear her hair like that ?  
Was Wisdom's mouth so shaped for  
          kisses ?

The Nightingale should be her bird,  
And not the Owl, big-eyed and solemn :  
How very fresh she looks, and yet  
She 's older far than Trajan's Column !

The magic hand that carved this face,  
And set this vine-work round it running,  
Perhaps ere mighty Phidias wrought  
Had lost its subtle skill and cunning.

Who was he? Was he glad or sad,  
Who knew to carve in such a fashion?  
Perchance he graved the dainty head  
For some brown girl that scorned his  
passion.

Perchance, in some still garden-place,  
Where neither fount nor tree to-day is,  
He flung the jewel at the feet  
Of Phryne, or perhaps 't was Laïs.

But he is dust ; we may not know  
His happy or unhappy story :  
Nameless, and dead these centuries,  
His work outlives him — there 's his  
glory !

Both man and jewel lay in earth  
Beneath a lava-buried city ;  
The countless summers came and went  
With neither haste, nor hate, nor pity.

Years blotted out the man, but left  
The jewel fresh as any blossom,  
Till some Visconti dug it up —  
To rise and fall on Mabel's bosom !

O nameless brother ! see how Time  
Your gracious handiwork has guarded :  
See how your loving, patient art  
Has come, at last, to be rewarded.

Who would not suffer slights of men,  
And pangs of hopeless passion also,  
To have his carven agate-stone  
On such a bosom rise and fall so !

XIII.

THE ONE WHITE ROSE.

A sorrowful woman said to me,  
"Come in and look on our child."  
I saw an Angel at shut of day,  
And it never spoke — but smiled.

I think of it in the city's streets,  
I dream of it when I rest —  
The violet eyes, the waxen hands,  
And the one white rose on the breast !

## XIV.

## THE QUEEN'S RIDE.

## AN INVITATION.

'T is that fair time of year,  
    Lady mine,  
When stately Guinevere,  
In her sea-green robe and hood,  
Went a-riding through the wood,  
    Lady mine.

And as the Queen did ride,  
    Lady mine,  
Sir Launcelot at her side  
Laughed and chatted, bending over,  
Half her friend and all her lover!  
    Lady mine.

And as they rode along,  
    Lady mine,  
The throstle gave them song,  
And the buds peeped through the grass  
To see youth and beauty pass !  
    Lady mine.

And on, through deathless time,  
    Lady mine,  
These lovers in their prime,  
(Two fairy ghosts together !)  
Ride, with sea-green robe, and feather !  
    Lady mine.

And so we two will ride,  
    Lady mine,  
At your pleasure, side by side,  
Laugh and chat ; I bending over,  
Half your friend and all your lover !  
    Lady mine.

But if you like not this,  
    Lady mine,  
And take my love amiss,  
Then I'll ride unto the end,  
Half your lover, all your friend !  
    Lady mine.

So, come which way you will,  
    Lady mine,  
Vale, upland, plain, and hill  
Wait your coming. For one day  
Loose the bridle, and away !  
    Lady mine.

xv.

## ROCOCO.

By studying my lady's eyes  
I've grown so learnèd. day by day,  
So Machiavelian in this wise,  
That when I send her flowers, I say

To each small flower (no matter what,  
Geranium, pink, or tuberose,  
Syringa, or forget-me-not,  
Or violet) before it goes :

“ Be not triumphant, little flower,  
When on her haughty heart you lie,  
But modestly enjoy your hour :  
She'll weary of you by and by.”



XVI.

DIRGE.

Let us keep him warm,  
Stir the dying fire :  
Upon his tired arm  
Slumbers young Desire.

Soon, ah, very soon  
We too shall not know  
Either sun or moon,  
Either grass or snow.

Others in our place  
Come to laugh and weep,  
Win or lose the race,  
And to fall asleep.

Let us keep him warm,  
Stir the dying fire :  
Upon his tired arm  
Slumbers young Desire.

What does all avail —  
Love, or power, or gold ?  
Life is like a tale  
Ended ere 't is told.

Much is left unsaid,  
Much is said in vain —  
Shall the broken thread  
Be taken up again ?

Let us keep him warm,  
Stir the dying fire :  
Upon his tired arm  
Slumbers young Desire.

Kisses one or two  
On his eyelids set,  
That, when all is through,  
He may not forget.

He has far to go —  
Is it East or West ?  
Whither ? Who may know !  
Let him take his rest.

Wind, and snow, and sleet —  
So the long night dies.

Draw the winding-sheet,  
Cover up his eyes.

Let us keep him warm,  
Stir the dying fire :  
Upon his tired arm  
Slumbers young Desire.

## XVII.

## BEFORE THE RAIN.

We knew it would rain, for all the  
morn,  
A spirit on slender ropes of mist  
Was lowering its golden buckets down  
Into the vapory amethyst

Of marshes and swamps and dismal  
fens —  
Scooping the dew that lay in the flowers,  
Dipping the jewels out of the sea,  
To sprinkle them over the land in  
showers.

We knew it would rain, for the poplars  
showed  
The white of their leaves, the amber  
grain  
Shrunk in the wind — and the lightning  
now  
Is tangled in tremulous skeins of rain !

## XVIII.

## AFTER THE RAIN.

The rain has ceased, and in my room  
The sunshine pours an airy flood ;  
And on the church's dizzy vane  
The ancient Cross is bathed in blood.

From out the dripping ivy-leaves,  
Antiquely-carven, gray and high,  
A dormer, facing westward, looks  
Upon the village like an eye :

And now it glimmers in the sun,  
A globe of gold, a disc, a speck :  
And in the belfry sits a Dove  
With purple ripples on her neck.

## XIX.

## THE UNFORGIVEN.

Near my bed, there, hangs the picture  
jewels could not buy from me :  
'T is a Siren, a brown Siren, in her sea-  
weed drapery,  
Playing on a lute of amber, by the  
margin of a sea.

In the east, the rose of morning seems  
as if 't would blossom soon,  
But it never, never blossoms, in this  
picture; and the moon  
Never ceases to be crescent, and the  
June is always June !

And the heavy-branched banana never  
yields its creamy fruit ;  
In the citron-trees are nightingales  
forever stricken mute ;  
And the Siren sits, her fingers on the  
pulses of the lute.

In the hushes of the midnight, when the  
    heliotropes grow strong  
With the dampness, I hear music —  
    hear a quiet, plaintive song —  
A most sad, melodious utterance, as of  
    some immortal wrong —

Like the pleading, oft repeated, of a  
    Soul that pleads in vain,  
Of a damnèd Soul repentant, that would  
    fain be pure again ! —  
And I lie awake and listen to the music  
    of her pain !

And whence comes this mournful music ?  
    — whence, unless it chance to be  
From the Siren, the brown Siren, in her  
    sea-weed drapery,  
Playing on a lute of amber, by the  
    margin of a sea !

## XX.

## LOVE'S CALENDAR.

The Summer comes and the Summer  
goes ;  
Wild-flowers are fringing the dusty  
lanes,  
The swallows go darting through fra-  
grant rains,  
Then, all of a sudden — it snows.

Dear Heart, our lives so happily flow,  
So lightly we heed the flying hours,  
We only know Winter is gone — by the  
flowers,  
We only know Winter is come — by the  
snow.



## XXI.

## LATAKIA.

When all the panes are hung with frost,  
Wild wizard-work of silver lace,  
I draw my sofa on the rug  
Before the ancient chimney-place.  
Upon the painted tiles are mosques  
And minarets, and here and there  
A blind muezzin lifts his hands  
And calls the faithful unto prayer.  
Folded in idle, twilight dreams,  
I hear the hemlock chirp and sing  
As if within its ruddy core  
It held the happy heart of Spring.  
Ferdousi never sang like that,  
Nor Saadi grave, nor Hafiz gay :  
I lounge, and blow white rings of  
    smoke,  
And watch them rise and float away.

The curling wreaths like turbans seem  
Of silent slaves that come and go —

Or Viziers, packed with craft and crime,  
Whom I behead from time to time,  
With pipe-stem, at a single blow.

And now and then a lingering cloud  
Takes gracious form at my desire,  
And at my side my lady stands,  
Unwinds her veil with snowy hands —  
A shadowy shape, a breath of fire !

O Love, if you were only here  
Beside me in this mellow light,  
Though all the bitter winds should blow,  
And all the ways be choked with snow,  
'T would be a true Arabian night !

## XXII.

## A WINTER-PIECE.

Sous le voile qui vous protège,  
Défiant les regards jaloux,  
Si vous sortez par cette neige,  
Redoutez vos pieds andalous.

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER.

Beneath the heavy veil you wear,  
Shielded from jealous eyes you go ;  
But of your pretty feet have care  
If you should venture through the snow.

Howe'er you tread, a dainty mould  
Betrays that light foot all the same ;  
Upon this glistening snowy fold  
At every step it signs your name.

Thus guided, one might come too close  
Upon the slyly-hidden nest  
Where Psyche, with her cheek's cold  
    rose,  
On Love's warm bosom lies at rest.

## XXIII.

## TIGER LILIES.

I like not lady-slippers,  
Nor yet the sweet-pea blossoms,  
Not yet the flaky roses,  
    Red, or white as snow ;  
I like the chaliced lilies,  
The heavy Eastern lilies,  
The gorgeous tiger-lilies,  
    That in our garden grow !

For they are tall and slender ;  
Their mouths are dashed with carmine,  
And when the wind sweeps by them,  
    On their emerald stalks  
They bend so proud and graceful —  
They are Circassian women,  
The favorites of the Sultan,  
    Adown our garden walks !

And when the rain is falling,  
I sit beside the window  
And watch them glow and glisten,  
    How they burn and glow !

O for the burning lilies,  
The tender Eastern lilies,  
The gorgeous tiger-lilies,  
That in our garden grow !

## XXIV.

## PISCATAQUA RIVER.

Thou singest by the gleaming isles,  
By woods and fields of corn,  
Thou singest, and the heaven smiles  
Upon my birthday morn.

But I within a city, I,  
So full of vague unrest,  
Would almost give my life to lie  
An hour upon thy breast ;

To let the wherry listless go,  
And, wrapt in dreamy joy,  
Dip, and surge idly to and fro,  
Like the red harbor-buoy !

To sit in happy indolence,  
To rest upon the oars,  
And catch the heavy earthy scents  
That blow from summer shores :

To see the rounded sun go down,  
And with its parting fires

Light up the windows of the town  
And burn the tapering spires :

And then to hear the muffled tolls  
From steeples slim and white,  
And watch, among the Isles of Shoals,  
The Beacon's orange light.

O River ! flowing to the main  
Through woods and fields of corn,  
Hear thou my longing and my pain  
This sunny birthday morn :

And take this song which sorrow shapes  
To music like thine own,  
And sing it to the cliffs and capes  
And crags where I am known !

XXV.

## QUATRAINS.

*Masks.*

Black Tragedy lets slip her grim disguise  
And shows you laughing lips and roguish eyes ;  
But when, unmasked, gay Comedy appears,  
How wan her cheeks are, and what heavy tears !

*The Rose.*

Fixed to her necklace, like another gem,  
A rose she wore — the flower June made for her :  
Fairer it looked than when upon the stem,  
And must, indeed, have been much happier.

*The Parcæ.*

In their dark House of Cloud  
The three weird sisters toil till time be sped ;



One unwinds life ; one ever weaves the  
shroud ;  
One waits to cut the thread.

*Grace and Strength.*

Manoah's son, in his blind rage malign  
Tumbling the temple down upon his foes,  
Did no such feat as yonder delicate vine  
That day by day untired holds up a rose.

*Popularity.*

Such kings of shreds have wooed and  
won her,  
Such crafty knaves her laurel owned,  
It has become almost an honor  
Not to be crowned.

*Maple Leaves.*

October turned my maple's leaves to  
gold ;  
The most are gone now ; here and there  
one lingers :  
Soon these will slip from out the twigs'  
weak hold,  
Like coins between a dying miser's fin-  
gers.

## XXVI.

## LAMIA.

“Go on your way, and let me pass.  
You stop a wild despair.  
I would that I were turned to brass  
Like that chained lion there,

“Which, couchant by the postern gate,  
In weather foul or fair,  
Looks down serenely desolate,  
And nothing does but stare !

“Ah, what ’s to me the burgeoned year,  
The sad leaf or the gay ?  
Let Launcelot and Queen Guinevere  
Their falcons fly this day.

“’T will be as royal sport, pardie,  
As falconers have tried  
At Astolat — but let me be !  
I would that I had died.

“I met a woman in the glade :  
Her hair was soft and brown,

And long bent silken lashes weighed  
Her ivory eyelids down.

“ I kissed her hand, I called her blest,  
I held her leal and fair —  
She turned to shadow on my breast,  
And melted in the air !

“ And, lo ! about me, fold on fold,  
A writhing serpent hung —  
An eye of jet, a skin of gold,  
A garnet for a tongue !

“ O, let the petted falcons fly  
Right merry in the sun ;  
But let me be ! for I shall die  
Before the year is done.”

## XXVII.

## AMONTILLADO.

VINTAGE, 1826.

Rafters black with smoke,  
White with sand the floor is,  
Twenty whiskered Dons  
Calling to Dolores —  
Tawny flower of Spain,  
Wild-rose of Granada,  
Keeper of the wines  
In this old posada.

Hither, light-of-foot,  
Dolores, Hebe, Circe ! —  
Pretty Spanish girl,  
With not a bit of mercy !  
Here I 'm sad and sick,  
Faint and thirsty very,  
And she does n't bring  
The Amontillado Sherry !

Thank you. Breath of June !  
Now my heart beats free, ah !

Kisses for your hand,  
Amigita mia !  
You shall live in song,  
Ripe and warm and cheery,  
Mellowing with years,  
Like Amontillado Sherry.

Evil spirits, fly !  
Care, begone, blue dragon !  
Only shapes of joy  
Are sculptured on the flagon :  
Lyrics — repartees —  
Kisses — all that's merry,  
Rise to touch the lip  
In Amontillado Sherry !

Here be worth and wealth,  
And love, the arch enchanter ;  
Here the golden blood  
Of saints in this decanter !  
When old Charon comes  
To row me o'er his ferry,  
I'll bribe him with a case  
Of Amontillado Sherry !

While the earth spins round  
And the stars lean over,

May this amber sprite  
Never lack a lover.  
Blessèd be the man  
Who lured her from the berry,  
And blest the girl who brings  
The Amontillado Sherry.

What ! the flagon 's dry ?  
Hark, old Time's confession —  
Both hands crost at XII,  
Owning his transgression !  
Pray, old monk ! for all  
Generous souls and merry,  
May they have their fill  
Of Amontillado Sherry !

## XXVIII.

## THE FADED VIOLET.

What thought is folded in thy leaves !  
What tender thought, what speechless  
    pain !

I hold thy faded lips to mine,  
Thou darling of the April rain !

I hold thy faded lips to mine,  
Though scent and azure tint are fled —  
O dry, mute lips ! ye are the type  
Of something in me cold and dead :

Of something wilted like thy leaves ;  
Of fragrance flown, of beauty dim ;  
Yet, for the love of those white hands  
That found thee by a river's brim —

That found thee when thy dewy mouth  
Was purpled as with stains of wine —  
For love of her who love forgot,  
I hold thy faded lips to mine.

That thou shouldst live when I am dead,  
When hate is dead, for me, and wrong,  
For this, I use my subtlest art,  
For this, I fold thee in my song.



## XXIX.

“ AH SAD ARE THEY WHO  
KNOW NOT LOVE.”

Ah, sad are they who know not love,  
But, far from passion's tears and smiles,  
Drift down a moonless sea, beyond  
The silvery coasts of fairy isles.

And sadder they whose longing lips  
Kiss empty air, and never touch  
The dear warm mouth of those they  
love —  
Waiting, wasting, suffering much.

But clear as amber, fine as musk,  
Is life to those who, pilgrim-wise,  
Move hand in hand from dawn to dusk,  
Each morning nearer Paradise.

O, not for them shall angels pray !  
They stand in everlasting light,  
They walk in Allah's smile by day,  
And nestle in his heart by night.

## XXX.

## THE KING'S WINE.

The small green grapes in countless  
clusters grew,  
Feeding on mystic moonlight and white  
dew,  
And mellow sunshine, the long summer  
through :

Till, with faint tremor in her veins, the  
Vine  
Felt the delicious pulses of the wine ;  
And the grapes ripened in the year's  
decline.

And day by day the Virgins watched  
their charge ;  
And when, at last, beyond the horizon's  
marge,  
The harvest-moon droopt beautiful and  
large,

The subtle spirit in the grape was  
    caught,  
And to the slowly-dying Monarch  
    brought  
In a great cup fantastically wrought.

Of this he drank ; then straightway  
    from his brain  
Went the weird malady, and once again  
He walked the Palace, free of scar or  
    pain —

But strangely changed, for somehow he  
    had lost  
Body and voice : the courtiers, as he  
    crossed  
The royal chambers, whispered — *The  
    King's ghost !*

## XXXI.

## CASTLES.

There is a picture in my brain  
That only fades to come again —  
The sunlight, through a veil of rain  
    To leeward, gilding  
A narrow stretch of brown sea-sand,  
A light-house half a league from land,  
And two young lovers, hand in hand,  
    A castle-building.

Upon the budded apple-trees  
The robins sing by twos and threes,  
And ever at the faintest breeze  
    Down drops a blossom ;  
And ever would that lover be  
The wind that robs the burgeoned tree,  
And lifts the soft tress daintily  
    On Beauty's bosom.

Ah, graybeard, what a happy thing  
It was, when life was in its spring,  
To peep through love's betrothal ring  
    At Fields Elysian,

To move and breathe in magic air,  
To think that all that seems is fair —  
Ah, ripe young mouth and golden hair,  
    Thou pretty vision !

Well, well, I think not on these two  
But the old wound breaks out anew,  
And the old dream, as if 't were true,  
    In my heart nestles ;  
Then tears come welling to my eyes,  
For yonder, all in saintly guise,  
As 't were, a sweet dead woman lies  
    Upon the trestles !

## XXXII.

## UNSUNG.

As sweet as the breath that goes  
From the lips of the white rose,  
As weird as the elfin lights  
That glimmer of frosty nights,  
As wild as the winds that tear  
The curled red leaf in the air,  
Is the song I have never sung.

In slumber, a hundred times  
I have said the mystic rhymes,  
But ere I open my eyes  
This ghost of a poem flies ;  
Of the interfluent strains  
Not even a note remains :  
I know by my pulses' beat  
It was something wild and sweet,  
And my heart is strangely stirred  
By an unremembered word !

I strive, but I strive in vain,  
To recall the lost refrain.

On some miraculous day  
Perhaps it will come and stay;  
In some unimagined Spring  
I may find my voice, and sing  
The song I have never sung.

## XXXIII.

## AN OLD CASTLE.

The gray arch crumbles,  
And totters, and tumbles ;  
The bat has built in the banquet hall :  
In the donjon-keep  
Sly mosses creep ;  
The ivy has scaled the southern wall.  
No man-at-arms  
Sounds quick alarms  
A-top of the cracked martello tower ;  
The drawbridge-chain  
Is broken in twain —  
The bridge will neither rise nor lower.  
Not any manner  
Of broidered banner  
Flaunts at a blazoned herald's call.  
Lilies float  
In the stagnant moat ;  
And fair they are, and tall.

Here, in the old  
Forgotten springs,



Was wassail held by queens and kings ;  
Here at the board  
Sat clown and lord,  
Maiden fair and lover bold,  
Baron fat and minstrel lean,  
The prince with his stars,  
The knight with his scars,  
The priest in his gabardine.

Where is she  
Of the fleur-de-lys,  
And that true knight who wore her  
gages ?  
Where are the glances  
That bred wild fancies  
In curly heads of my lady's pages ?  
Where are those  
Who, in steel or hose,  
Held revel here, and made them gay ?  
Where is the laughter  
That shook the rafter —  
Where is the rafter, by the way ?  
Gone is the roof,  
And perched aloof  
Is an owl, like a friar of Orders Gray.  
(Perhaps 't is the priest  
Come back to feast —

He had ever a tooth for capon, he !  
But the capon 's cold,  
And the steward 's old,  
And the butler 's lost the larder-key !)

The doughty lords  
Sleep the sleep of swords.  
Dead are the dames and damozels.  
The King in his crown  
Hath laid him down,  
And the Jester with his bells.

All is dead here :  
Poppies are red here,  
Vines in my lady's chamber grow —  
If 't was her chamber  
Where they clamber  
Up from the poisonous weeds below.  
All is dead here,  
Joy is fled here ;  
Let us hence. 'T is the end of all —  
The gray arch crumbles,  
And totters, and tumbles,  
And Silence sits in the banquet hall.

## XXXIV.

## THE FLIGHT OF THE GODDESS.

A man should live in a garret aloof,  
And have few friends, and go poorly  
    clad,  
With an old hat stopping the chink in  
    the roof,  
To keep the Goddess constant and glad.

Of old, when I walked on a rugged way,  
And gave much work for but little  
    bread,  
The Goddess dwelt with me night and  
    day,  
Sat at my table, haunted my bed.

The narrow, mean attic, I see it now!—  
Its window o'erlooking the city's tiles,  
The sunset's fires, and the clouds of  
    snow,  
And the river wandering miles and  
    miles.

Just one picture hung in the room,  
The saddest story that Art can tell—  
Dante and Virgil in lurid gloom  
Watching the Lovers float through Hell.

Wretched enough was I sometimes,  
Pinched, and harassed with vain de-  
sires ;  
But thicker than clover sprung the  
rhymes  
As I dwelt like a sparrow among the  
spires.

Midnight filled my slumbers with song ;  
Music haunted my dreams by day :  
Now I listen and wait and long,  
But the Delphian airs have died away.

I wonder and wonder how it befell :  
Suddenly I had friends in crowds ;  
I bade the house-tops a long farewell ;  
“ Good by,” I cried, “ to the stars and  
clouds !

“ But thou, rare soul, that hast dwelt  
with me,  
Spirit of Poesy ! thou divine

Breath of the morning, thou shalt be,  
Goddess ! for ever and ever mine."

And the woman I loved was now my  
    bride,  
And the house I wanted was my own ;  
I turned to the Goddess satisfied —  
But the Goddess had somehow flown !

Flown, and I fear she will never return :  
I am much too sleek and happy for her,  
Whose lovers must hunger, and waste,  
    and burn,  
Ere the beautiful heathen heart will stir.

I call — but she does not stoop to my  
    cry ;  
I wait — but she lingers, and ah ! so  
    long !  
It was not so in the years gone by,  
When she touched my lips with chrism  
    of song.

I swear I will get me a garret again,  
And adore, like a Parsee, the sunset's  
    fires,  
And lure the Goddess, by vigil and pain,  
Up with the sparrows among the spires.

For a man should live in a garret aloof,  
And have few friends, and go poorly  
    clad,  
With an old hat stopping the chink in  
    the roof,  
To keep the Goddess constant and glad.

xxxv.

## THE WORLD'S WAY.

At Haroun's court it chanced, upon a  
time,  
An Arab poet made this pleasant rhyme :

“The new moon is a horseshoe, wrought  
of God,  
Wherewith the Sultan's stallion shall be  
shod.”

On hearing this, his highness smiled,  
and gave  
The man a gold-piece. *Sing again, O  
slave!*

Above his lute the happy singer bent,  
And turned another gracious compli-  
ment.

And, as before, the smiling Sultan gave  
The man a sekkah. *Sing again, O  
slave!*

Again the verse came, fluent as a rill  
That wanders, silver-footed, down a  
hill.

The Sultan, listening, nodded as before,  
Still gave the gold, and still demanded  
more.

The nimble fancy that had climbed so  
high  
Grew weary with its climbing by and by :

Strange discords rose : the sense went  
quite amiss ;  
The singer's rhymes refused to meet  
and kiss :

Invention flagged, the lute had got un-  
strung,  
And twice he sang the song already  
sung.

The Sultan, furious, called a mute, and  
said,  
*O Musta, straightway whip me off  
his head!*



Poets ! not in Arabia alone  
You get beheaded when your skill is  
gone.

## XXXVI.

## PALINODE.

When I was young and light of heart  
I made sad songs with easy art :  
Now I am sad, and no more young,  
My sorrow cannot find a tongue.

Pray, Muses, since I may not sing  
Of Death or any grievous thing,  
Teach me some joyous strain, that I  
May mock my youth's hypocrisy !

XII SONNETS.



## SONNETS.

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### I.

#### “EVEN THIS WILL PASS AWAY.”

Touched with the delicate green of early  
    May,  
Or later, when the rose unveils her face,  
The world hangs glittering in star-  
    strown space,  
Fresh as a jewel found but yesterday.  
And yet 't is very old ; what tongue may  
    say  
How old it is ? Race follows upon race.  
Forgetting and forgotten ; in their place  
Sink tower and temple ; nothing long  
    may stay.  
We build on tombs, and live our day,  
    and die ;  
From out our dust new towers and  
    temples start ;  
Our very name becomes a mystery.

What cities no man ever heard of lie  
Under the glacier, in the mountain's  
heart,  
In violet glooms beneath the moaning  
sea!

## II.

## AT STRATFORD-UPON-AVON.

Thus spake his dust (so seemed it as I  
read  
The words) : *Good friend, for Jesus'  
sake forbear*  
(Poor ghost ! ) *To digg the dust enclosed  
heare —*  
Then came the malediction on the head  
Of who so dare disturb the sacred dead.  
Outside the mavis whistled strong and  
clear  
And, touched with the sweet glamour of  
the year,  
The winding Avon murmured in its bed.  
But in the solemn Stratford church the  
air  
Was chill and dank, and on the foot-  
worn tomb  
The evening shadows deepened mo-  
mently :  
Then a great awe crept on me, standing  
there,

As if some speechless Presence in the  
gloom  
Was hovering, and fain would speak  
with me.



## III.

## EGYPT.

Fantastic Sleep is busy with my eyes :  
I seem in some waste solitude to stand  
Once ruled of Cheops : upon either hand  
A dark illimitable desert lies,  
Sultry and still — a realm of mysteries :  
A wide-browed Sphinx, half buried in  
    the sand,  
With orbless sockets stares across the  
    land,  
The woefulest thing beneath these  
    brooding skies  
Where all is woful, weird-lit vacancy.  
'T is neither midnight, twilight, nor  
    moonrise.  
Lo ! while I gaze, beyond the vast sand-  
    sea  
The nebulous clouds are downward  
    slowly drawn,  
And one bleared star, faint-glimmering  
    like a bee,  
Is shut in the rosy outstretched hand of  
    Dawn.

## IV.

ENAMORED ARCHITECT OF  
AIRY RHYME.

Enamored architect of airy rhyme,  
Build as thou wilt ; heed not what each  
man says.  
Good souls, but innocent of dreamers'  
ways,  
Will come, and marvel why thou wastest  
time ;  
Others, beholding how thy turrets climb  
'Twixt theirs and heaven, will hate thee  
all their days ;  
But most beware of those who come to  
praise.  
O Wondersmith, O worker in sublime  
And heaven-sent dreams, let art be all  
in all ;  
Build as thou wilt, unspoiled by praise  
or blame,  
Build as thou wilt, and as thy light is  
given :  
Then, if at last the airy structure fall,

Dissolve, and vanish — take thyself no  
shame.

They fail, and they alone, who have not  
striven.

## v.

HENRY HOWARD BROWNELL.

They never crowned him, never knew  
his worth,  
But let him go unlaureled to the grave :  
Hereafter there are guerdons for the  
brave,  
Roses for martyrs who wear thorns on  
earth,  
Balms for bruised hearts that languish in  
the dearth  
Of human love. So let the lilies wave  
Above him, nameless. Little did he  
crave  
Men's praises. Modestly, with kindly  
mirth,  
Not sad nor bitter, he accepted fate —  
Drank deep of life, knew books, and  
hearts of men,  
Cities and camps, and war's immortal  
woe,  
Yet bore through all (such virtue in him  
sate  
His Spirit is not whiter now than then!)  
A simple, loyal nature, pure as snow.

## VI.

## BARBERRIES.

In scarlet clusters o'er the gray stone-  
wall

The barberries lean in thin autumnal  
air :

Just when the fields and garden-plots are  
bare,

And ere the green leaf takes the tint of  
fall,

They come, to make the eye a festival !  
Along the road, for miles, their torches  
flare.

Ah, if your deep-sea coral were but rare  
(The damask rose might envy it withal),  
What bards had sung your praises long  
ago,

Called you fine names in honey-worded  
books —

The rosy tramps of turnpike and of lane,  
September's blushes, Ceres' lips aglow,  
Little-Red-Ridinghoods, for your sweet  
looks ! —

But your plebeian beauty is in vain.

## VII.

## THE LORELEI.

Yonder we see it from the steamer's  
deck,  
The haunted Mountain of the Lorelei —  
The o'erhanging crags sharp-cut against  
a sky  
Clear as a sapphire without flaw or fleck.  
'T was here the Siren lay in wait to  
wreck  
The fisher-lad. At dusk, as he passed  
by,  
Perchance he 'd hear her tender, amor-  
ous sigh,  
And, seeing the wondrous whiteness of  
her neck,  
Perchance would halt, and lean towards  
the shore ;  
Then she by that soft magic which she  
had  
Would lure him, and in gossamers of her  
hair,  
Gold upon gold, would wrap him o'er  
and o'er,

Wrap him, and sing to him, and set him  
mad,  
Then drag him down to no man knoweth  
where.

## VIII.

## TO L. T. IN FLORENCE.

You by the Arno shape your marble  
dream,  
Under the cypress and the olive trees,  
While I, this side the wild, wind-beaten  
seas,  
Unrestful by the Charles's placid stream,  
Long once again to catch the golden  
gleam  
Of Brunelleschi's dome, and lounge at  
ease  
In those pleached gardens and fair gal-  
leries.  
And yet, perhaps, you envy me, and  
deem  
My star the happier, since it holds me  
here.  
Even so, one time, beneath the cypresses  
My heart turned longingly across the  
sea,



Aching with love for thee, New England  
dear !

I would have given all Titian's god-  
desses

For one poor cowslip or anemone.

## IX.

## PURSUIT AND POSSESSION.

When I behold what pleasure is Pursuit,  
What life, what glorious eagerness it is ;  
Then mark how full Possession falls from this,  
How fairer seems the blossom than the fruit —  
I am perplexed, and often stricken mute  
Wondering which attained the higher bliss,  
The wingéd insect, or the chrysalis  
It thrust aside with unreluctant foot.  
Spirit of verse that still elud'st my art,  
Thou airy phantom that dost ever haunt me,  
O never, never rest upon my heart,  
If when I have thee I shall little want thee !  
Still flit away in moonlight, rain, and dew,  
Wills-o'-the-wisp, that I may still pursue !

x.

## THREE FLOWERS.

Herewith I send you three pressed with-  
ered flowers :

This one was white, with golden star ;  
this, blue

As Capri's cave ; that, purple and shot  
through

With sunset-orange. Where the Duomo  
towers

In diamond air, and under hanging bow-  
ers

The Arno glides, this faded violet grew  
On Landor's grave ; from Landor's heart  
it drew

Its magic azure in the long spring hours.

Within the shadow of the Pyramid

Of Caius Cestius was the daisy found,

White as the soul of Keats in Paradise.

The pansy — there were hundreds of  
them, hid

In the thick grass that folded Shelley's  
mound,  
Guarding his ashes with most lovely  
eyes.

## XI.

## AT BAY RIDGE, LONG ISLAND.

Pleasant it is to lie amid the grass  
Under these shady locusts, half the day,  
Watching the ships reflected on the Bay,  
Topmast and shroud, as in a wizard's  
    glass :

To see the happy-hearted martins pass,  
Brushing the dewdrops from the lilac  
    spray :

Or else to hang enamored o'er some lay  
Of fairy regions : or to muse, alas !  
On Dante, exiled, journeying outworn ;  
On patient Milton's sorrowfulest eyes  
Shut from the splendors of the Night  
    and Morn :

To think that now, beneath the Italian  
    skies,  
In such clear air as this, by Tiber's  
    wave,  
Daisies are trembling over Keats's grave.

## XII.

## SLEEP.

When to soft Sleep we give ourselves  
    away,  
And in a dream as in a fairy bark  
Drift on and on through the enchanted  
    dark  
To purple daybreak — little thought we  
    pay  
To that sweet bitter world we know by  
    day.  
We are clean quit of it, as is a lark  
So high in heaven no human eye may  
    mark  
The thin swift pinion cleaving through  
    the gray.  
Till we awake ill fate can do no ill,  
The resting heart shall not take up  
    again  
The heavy load that yet must make it  
    bleed ;

For this brief space the loud world's  
voice is still,  
No faintest echo of it brings us pain.  
How will it be when we shall sleep in-  
deed?

















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